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Sonora – A series of free public workshops are being offered throughout the foothills to introduce rural Sierra communities to the Sierra Nevada Community Conservation and Wildfire Protection Plan Guidebook. The Guidebook is designed to help communities in California's Sierra Nevada create a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that balances fire safety and conservation values, and is a collaboration between state, federal, and local fire agencies including CALFIRE, USFS, California Fire Safe Council, local governments and conservation leaders.

The final workshop will be held in Sonora on September 11th and 12th at the Tuolumne County Ambulance & Fire Administration Building. The first day is scheduled from 9am-12:30pm and will be an introduction to the workbook and how it can be used to create a customizable plan. The second day will be a hands-on workshop where participants will go through the process of developing a plan and is scheduled from 10am to 4pm.

"We all have a stake in helping Sierra communities reduce and manage wildfire risk," said Kate Dargan, California State Fire Marshal. "Our goal is to help local communities develop proactive fire planning that enhances the natural values of their surrounding lands while providing for community fire safety and conserving our remaining wild areas."

This workshop is offered to introduce Sierra Fire Safe Councils, state and federal agencies, and community stakeholders to a new template to create and utilize a customized Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The CCWPP Guidebook is an important tool for local communities to work collaboratively, to help reduce the extreme fire threats facing California's wildland-urban interface communities.

In addition to creating the Guidebook to help communities develop fire plans, the multi-stakeholder project team -- led by Registered Professional Forester Tracy Katelman -- has developed a landowner brochure based on a detailed set of Conservation Principles. The brochure is especially targeted to Sierra residents who want to learn how to reduce the fuels around their property without adversely affecting the natural environment. A website has also been developed as part of the package of information to support these local collaborative efforts.

"This is an exciting time to be offering this project to Sierra communities. Most people want to do what's appropriate to be fire safe while still respecting the wildness of the Sierra Nevada. The materials we developed through this collaborative process will provide the tools for them to do that," stated Katelman.

The CCWPP Guidebook is an extensive document with seven sections: How To Use this Guidebook, Executive Summary & Action Plan, Appendices, References, Project Files, Conservation and Wildfire Background Materials, and Instructions for writing a plan. The entire Guidebook has been created in Microsoft Word documents that can be downloaded and customized to create a local community fire plan. Although it was written specifically for the Sierra Nevada, many of these documents and supporting materials are transferable to other regions.

According to Jay Watson from the California Fire Safe Council, "Diverse interests have come together to address a critical need and promote conservation-based planning that helps keep communities safe. In the aftermath of Lake Tahoe's Angora Fire, it has never been more timely – or more important – to have this kind of tool, and to take action."

To RSVP or for more information, contact Scott Oneto, University of California Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor at 209-533-5686 or sroneto@ucdavis.edu